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Study to obtain description of 1958 freshman class from preadmission tests and high school transcripts, and the correlation of these measures to first term grade averages, in search for admissions criteria. Researchers discovered that combining three measures provided more accurate indication of later performance than any single measure.

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1959 Admissions Research at the Woman's College, University of North Carolina, Greensboro

A Summary of Basic Findings

The Preliminary Study:

For every freshman entering in the fall of 1958 at the Woman's College, scores on the College Board Scholastic Aptitude Test were obtained as part of the admissions procedure. High school records for these students were also available. The research summarized herein, conducted by the Woman's College Admissions Committee consisted essentially of obtaining a description of the 1958 freshman class in terms of the pre-admissions measures available from tests and high school transcripts, and of determining the relationships of these measures to the first term average grade at the Woman's College, in a search for usuable admissions criteria in subsequent years.

The Pre-Admissions Measures:

The College Board Scholastic Aptitude Test provides two measures. The Verbal score is a measure of general verbal intelligence, or ability to handle ideas expressed in language; the Mathematical score is a measure of ability to handle concepts expressed in numbers or mathematical symbols. Although these scores are not "pure" measures of inherent ability, neither has proved particularly susceptible to improvement by training. Scores on these tests are expressed on a range of from 200 to 800 where 500 is approximately the average for those generally highly selective institutions in the original College Board normative sample.

The measure drawn from the high school transcript for the first basic study was the average of grades thereon in academic subjects. This average was computed by assigning A or its numerical equivalent a weight of 40, B a weight of 30, etc., summating, and dividing the total by the number of units to obtain a mean. Such an average was computed for every entering freshman.

Findings:

1. The average freshman at the Woman's College is slightly above the national average for all colleges in scholastic ability or intelligence.

The average SAT-V score for entering freshmen this year is 447; the average SAT-M score is 449. The middle two-thirds of the group scored between about 358 and 536 on the SAT-V and between 374 and 524 on the SAT-M. Although data for the other two branches of the University are not yet available, it may be expected that these measures will compare favorably with ability measures at the other two units, as similar minimal standards were held this past year by all.

The College Board has reported that the average for public and private colleges over the country would be about 425, with the middle two-thirds of students ranging between 325 and 525. The national average for high school seniors

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would be about 350.

2. Entering freshmen in 1958 held relatively high academic averages in high school.

With no account taken of differences among schools in grading standards, level of instruction, etc., 28 per cent of the freshmen at Woman's College had A averages in high school, 57 per cent had B averages, and 15 percent had C averages. Although exact rank in class was available for only a small proportion of the class, it was apparent that less than five per cent ranked in the bottom half of the class. The average high school average for entering freshmen was approximately 32, or B+.

3. In general, all three pre-admissions measures are substantially related to later college performance as measured by the first term average grade.[1]

Figures 1, 2, and 3 show the range of scores or high school averages made by 61 freshmen with first term averages of from 30 to 40, of 264 freshmen with first term averages of from 20 to 29, of 258 freshmen with first term averages of from 10 to 19, and of 35 freshmen with first term averages of from 0 to 9. Although a wide range of scores is found at each grade level, the relationship between the measures and college grades seems clear.

Another way to express the relationship is in terms of the proportion of students with a given score who later achieve or excel a given grade level in college. For example, of those students with A (or 40) averages in high school, 75 per cent made first term grades of C (20) or better at Woman's College; of those with B (30) averages in high school, 42 per cent made averages last term of C or better; and of those with C averages in high school only 14 per cent made C or better first term averages. Similar results obtained when the performance of students with various selected College Board test scores was examined.

4. Combining all three measures provides a more accurate indication of later performance than does any single measure alone.

Multiple regression techniques permit the determination of optimal weightings of several different measures if the highest accuracy of prediction is to be obtained. Using such techniques, it was found that the Mathematical score should be given only about one-fourth the weight given to the Verbal score, while the high school average should be given two-thirds the weight given to the Verbal score. Thus, a system for combining the several pre-admissions measures was derived empirically; this system provides a ranking of applicants in order of their academic promise in terms of faculty standards at Woman's College, and a prediction of grade or a probability of attaining any given first term grade. (When predicted grades for 1958 freshmen were so computed, 50 per cent were found to make actual first term averages within three points

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[1]Technical note: the coefficient of correlation between the first term average and the SAT-V score was found to be r = .59; between grades and SAT-M, r = .43; and between grades and the high school average, r = .44. With all three predictors, R = .68.

Figure 1

Range of SAT-V Scores of Students with First Term Average Grades in Range 0-9, 10-19, 20-29, and 30-40*

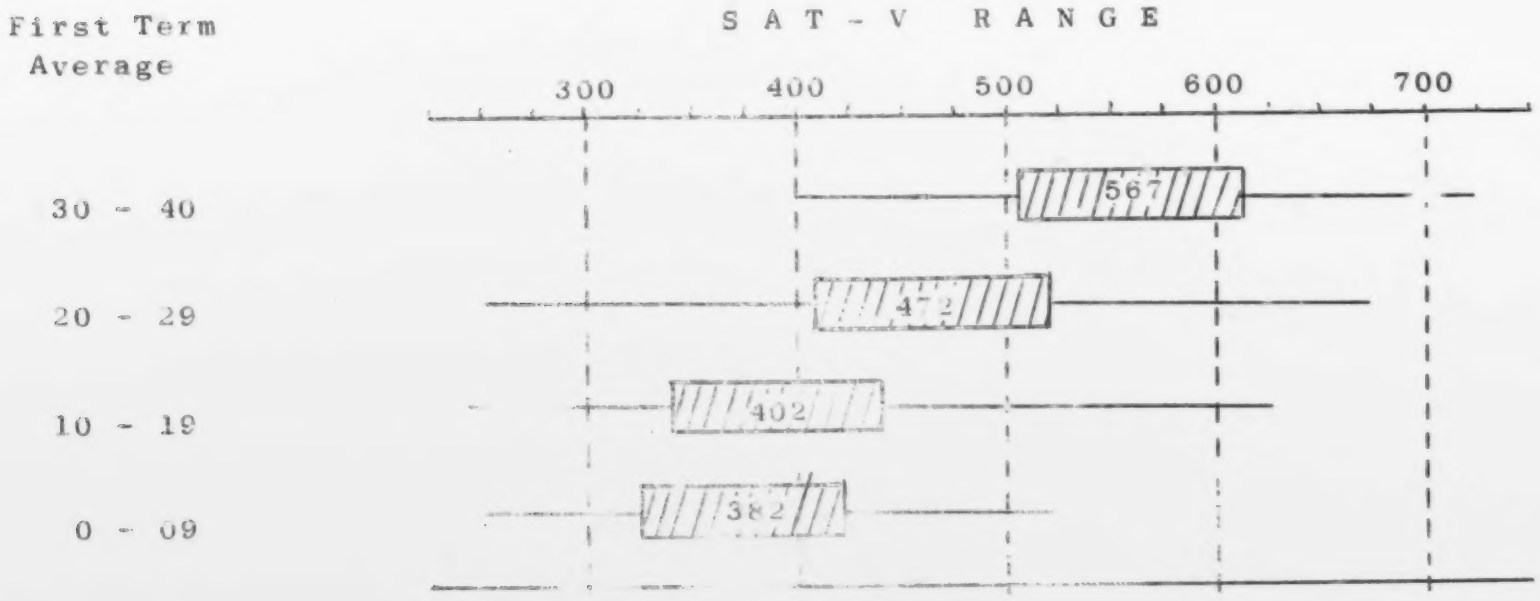
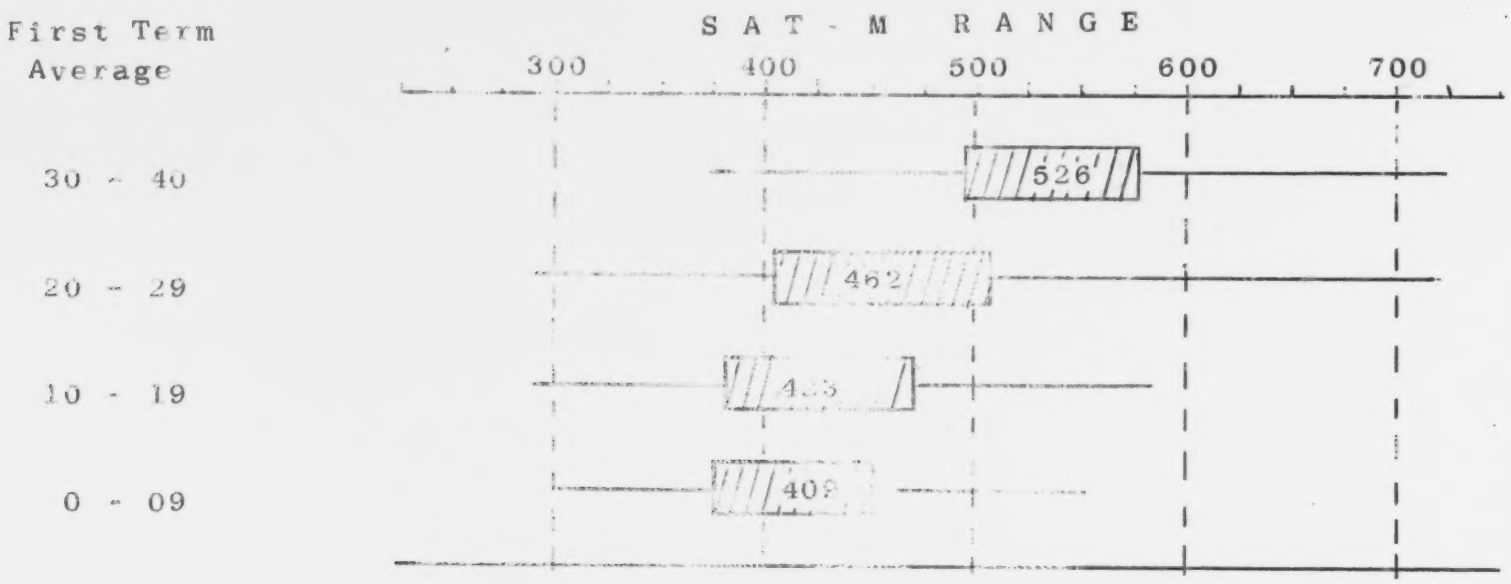


Figure 2

Range of SAT-M Scores of Students with First Term Average Grades in Range 0-9, 10-19, 20-29, and 30-40*

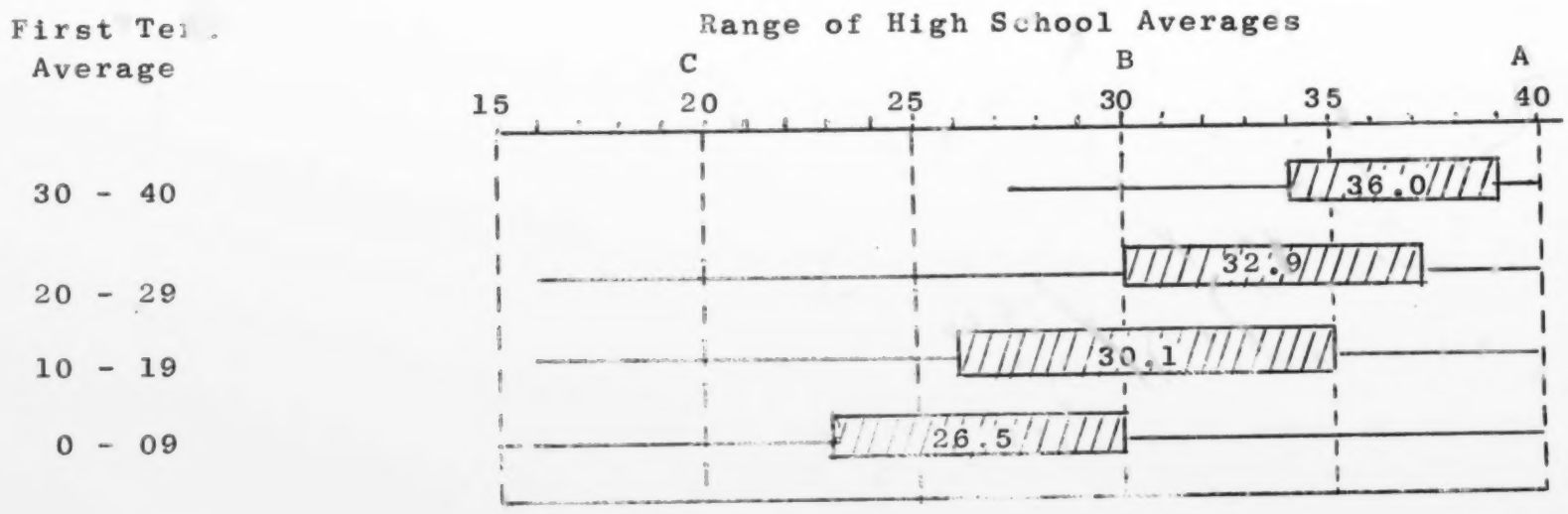


*Grade Averages computed by assigning A a weight of 40, B a weight of 30, C a weight of 20, D a weight of 10, and E or F a weight of 0.

Note: Length of bar indicates range of middle 50 per cent of test scores of given grade group; length of line indicates total range of test scores in each grade group. Number shown in bar is the average test score of the appropriate grade group.

Figure 3

Range of High School Averages of Students with First Term Average Grades in Range 0-9, 10-19, 20-29, and 30-40



((of forty)) of their predicted grade.)

5. In general, the minimal criteria set by the All-University Admissions Committee seem to describe, at best, marginal applicants or applicants with high risk of failure.

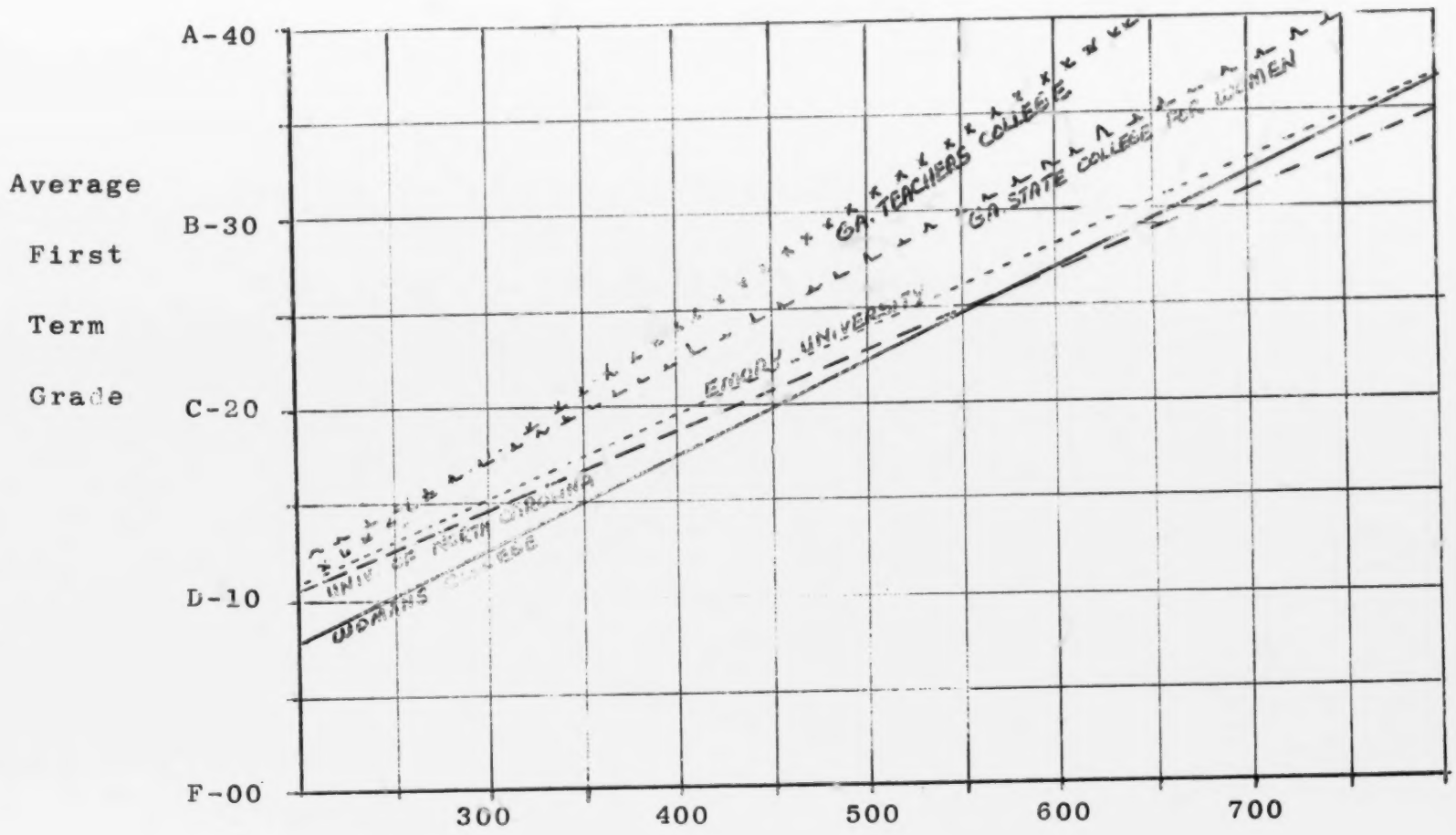
Students falling near or below such criteria, or who rank in the bottom half of their high school class, are being studied intensively by the Admissions Committee. The minimum score (a total of 700 on both tests) would generally indicate an applicant with about one chance in ten to achieve a first term average of C (20) or better (i.e., only about ten per cent of such applicants last year made a C or better average).

6. When compared with other institutions including the University at Chapel Hill, preliminary findings would indicate that standards of grading are not out of line with university-level standards.

As the other two units of the University complete their basic admissions research, it will be possible to compare grades given students of various ability levels at the Woman's College with grades given similar level students at the other units. At present, it is possible to compare Woman's College with findings at Chapel Hill last year, or with several other institutions on which data is published. Figure 4 shows such a comparison. For example, students at the Woman's College with SAT-V scores of 450 average C their first term; such students average C or C+ at the University of North Carolina or Emory University, B- at the Georgia State College for Women, or B at Georgia Teachers College.

Figure 4

Average First Term Grades in College for Students of Various Abil.ty Levels as Measured by the SAT-V Score



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March 17, 1959